

Creating Places where Learning Flourishes

Guelph – Niagara PD Day

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“Information is power”

“Knowledge is power”

What power does information have...

if it doesn't expand

KNOWLEDGE

that develops

UNDERSTANDING

which points and leads toward

WISDOM ?

“The Way of Wisdom” Michael Card

**The Way of Wisdom starts out
with a step of holy fear
and it makes its way alone
by every good word that you hear.
It has to do with passion
and it has to do with pain.
It has to do with One
who has both died and rose
again.
Died and rose again....**

**And the Way of Wisdom is living.
the Path of Peace is forgiving.
Behold the Man of Meaning.
Behold, He is the Lord.**

**The Way of Understanding lies
in not how much you know
for the pathway is a Person
that you come to love and so
you can stop pretending
that it all depends on you
for it's not how much you love
as much as how much He loves
you.
How much He loves you**

**And the Way of Wisdom is living.
The Path of Peace is forgiving.
Behold the Man of Meaning.
Behold, He is the Lord.**



“The Way of Wisdom” Michael Card

**The Way of Wisdom beckons us
to find the end of fear
that perfect love pursues.
For Wisdom did not come
to simply speak the words of
truth.
He's the Word that makes us true.**

**The Way of Wisdom starts out
with a step of holy fear.
That's only the beginning
and there's much more that is
clear.
The path leads on to love,
and love is fearless in its ways,
for Love Himself was not afraid
to die that we'd be saved.
To die that we'd be saved....**

**And the Way of Wisdom is living.
The Path of Peace is forgiving.
Behold the Man of Meaning.
Behold, He is the Lord.**

What is the way of wisdom for teaching and learning?

“... where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? Job 28:12

“then he looked at wisdom and appraised it; he confirmed it and tested it. And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord-that is **wisdom**, and to shun evil is understanding.' ” Job 28:27-28

Who endowed the heart with wisdom or gave understanding to the mind? Who has the wisdom to count the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens? Job 38:36-37

“Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.”
John Calvin, *Institutes* I.1.1

Our Context:

a Christ-centred Learning Community

Learning Community

Who am I? who are we?

What is a learning community?

What is a Christ-centered learning community?

What hinders the growth of community?

What things help a learning community thrive?

How does collegial community enhance learning?

What does it mean “to learn ...” ?

Learning is ...

What does it mean to learn?

God has created us so that
*we long to find meaning in the
experiences of life*, to see how
things relate to each other and
how things hang together.

A Vision with a Task, p. 131

To learn . . .

- ❑ to search for and discover God's "laws" for life and enjoy the freedom these bring;
- ❑ to make sense of the havoc and destructive power of sin
- ❑ to experience the liberating power of redemption in Jesus Christ;
- ❑ to live daily in the restorative strength of grace in all relationships

Shaping dreams and inspiring visions

"My job isn't so much to teach as it is to help students learn."

I said it before realizing exactly what I had said.

"What's the difference?" one of the judges asked. I thought for a moment ...

"You can teach to a wall, but when you help someone learn, you have to get involved with the whole person."

Guy Doud, Moulder of Dreams, p. 155. National Teacher of the Year, 1986.

Views of the learner – what is the way of wisdom?

created in God's image !

blank slate?

unfolding plant?

trainable object?

agent of social
change?

autonomous individual?

Facing our fears ...

In order to avoid a live encounter...

- ❖ *students* hide behind their notebooks and their silence,
- ❖ *teachers* can hide behind their desks, their expertise, their position,
- ❖ *colleagues* hide behind their subject specialization or grade level taught
- ❖ *administrators and officials* hide behind rules and policies

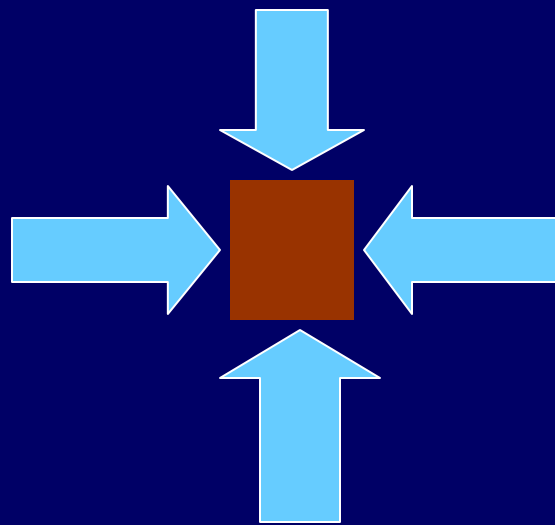
adapted from P. Palmer, 1998 *The Courage to teach*, p. 35-38

To teach is ... to create a space

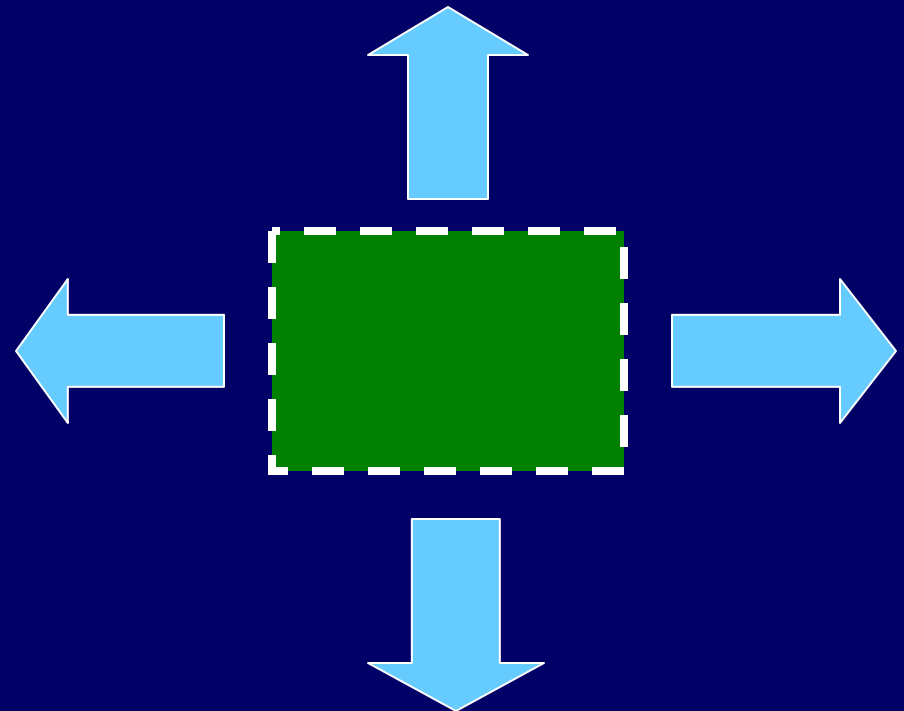
- ❖ the physical arrangement and feeling of the room
- ❖ the conceptual framework around which the topic is being explored
- ❖ the emotional ethos I hope to facilitate
- ❖ the ground rules that will guide our inquiry

What is learning like with...

a lack of space?



a lack of boundaries?



What do you think?

TURN TO YOUR NEIGHBOR -

share a personal
example when you
experienced a
lack of space

share a personal
example of
experiencing a
lack of boundaries

To lack space for learning

is to sit in a class where the teacher

- ❑ stuffs our minds with information,
- ❑ organizes it with finality,
- ❑ insists on having the answers while being uninterested in our views, and
- ❑ forces us into a grim competition for grades....

Parker J. Palmer, *To know as we are known: a spirituality of education*, p. 70.
HarperCollins, 1983

How do people react to a lack of space?

TUNING - OUT

disengagement

and/or

apathy

ACTING - OUT

thoughtlessness

and/or

aggression

Space, in and of itself, is often frightening...

Students are threatened by an open invitation to learn; they would much rather have their education packaged and sold by the teacher.

They are threatened by the strangeness of what they do not know, by the thought of having to expose their ignorance,

by having to relate to their peers in ways that would hardly occur outside of the classroom, and by the possibility of failure.... *To know as we are known*, p. 80

A learning space needs to be hospitable

not to make learning painless but to make the painful things possible, - - things such as

- exposing ignorance,
- testing tentative ideas,
- challenging false or partial information,
- mutual criticism of our thinking.

Each of these happen more readily in a hospitable atmosphere where people feel safe ... and not when threatened or judged.

kn as we are kn, p. 74

To teach is ... to create a space

...in which obedience to Truth is
practiced,

and

...in which community of truth is practiced

Parker J. Palmer, *To know as we are known: a spirituality of education* (1983) and *The courage to teach:
exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life* (1998)

We live with paradoxical tensions

A learning space should

- ❑ be open and bounded;
- ❑ be hospitable and 'charged';
- ❑ invite the voice of the individual and the voice of the group;
- ❑ honor the 'little' stories of the students and the 'big' stories of the disciplines and tradition;
- ❑ support solitude and community;
- ❑ welcome both silence and speech.

The courage to teach, p.74

Learning flourishes when I/we

- ❑ care for the quality of my own immediate space (*classroom*)
 - ❑ contribute to caring for our overall educational environment (*school*)
 - ❑ help to create an ethos more likely to form the character of students, staff and parents. (*community*)
- T. S. Groome, 439-440

How do we educate toward wisdom?

- Educating toward wisdom involves creating places where learning flourishes.
- Teaching involves guiding children and young people with openness and boundaries.
- Learning flourishes when it is interactive, purposeful, and involves choice.
- Teaching models learning when it demonstrates connections and engages children and young people in authentic products.

What do we (un)cover on the way toward wisdom?

Curriculum that educates toward wisdom seeks to (un)cover the riches of creation and culture. It involves growing in faith and inspiring with hope. Curriculum becomes dynamic and comes alive in learning experiences that engage teachers, children, young people, and parents in dialogue around big ideas and enduring questions.

nurturing Faith

inspiring Hope

modeling Love

What is our mandate? –

When it comes to developing your own curriculum?



does it feel like your hands are tied?

In a sense, we could look at curriculum as being developed from what is “*placed in our hands*” and what we “*take into our hands*” and then to shape and adapt it for children and young people in a specific community permeated with particular beliefs and values.

*Personal Qualities,
Gifts, Interests,
Expertise*

*District or
Association
Recommendations*

*Local School
Policies
and Practices*

Biblical Mandate/Invitation

*Government
Recommendations
and Requirements*

*Professional
Recommendations/
Standards*

Multiple Mandates

Biblically-based Curriculum

The primary and foundational mandate that is placed in our hands is the biblical invitation to love God above all, to stand in awe of his handiwork, to thrive in His word for Life, to breathe in and live in the Spirit, and to love other people as ourselves.

What is the relative influence of the seven mandates in your school:

Strong 5 4 2 1 Weak

- * *Personal (child + teacher)*
- * *Local*
- * *District/Association*
- * *Professional*
- * *Government*
- * *Biblical*

What evidence would you give?

Community ...

"is not an ideal that we
must realize;
it is rather a reality created
by God in Christ
in which we may participate."

D. Bonhoeffer (1954) *Life Together*, p.30.